

Tale Feathers

Sept. 2001

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Conservation Report

- Sue Gustafson

"I'm not interested in politics, I just want to be a biologist." Such were my thoughts upon undertaking a new line of work devoted to preserving the environment. But sadly, no matter how profound the findings of scientists are, or how impressive the recommendations are that come from such groups as the National Academy of Sciences, it does, in the end, come down to the decisions made by local, state, and federal lawmakers.

The current federal political climate, in which we continue to witness one after another defeat on key environmental issues, has resulted in a heightened awareness that votes cast by politicians will have not only short term effects, but also will have long term environmental implications. So no matter how much we dislike politics, we must get involved by letting our elected representatives know how we feel and what is important to us as their constituents. As SLAS's conservation representative, I send extensive correspondence to legislators supporting our position on issues which meet National Audubon Society's mission to "conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity."

In addition to hearing from organizations, our politicians need to hear from each and every one of us. Fortunately, this age of on-line technology has made information on environmental issues very

accessible and now even provides a nifty, easy way for YOU to let your voice be heard! The Audubon Action Alert website <http://www.capitolconnect.com/audubon/> gives you up-to-the-minute info on conservation issues pending before the U.S. Congress, or awaiting action by the President or other government agency. By inputting your name and address, you will be linked to your lawmaker(s) and provided with a sample letter. You can indicate your correspondence be sent via U.S. mail, email, or fax (fax is most effective!). All it takes is a few "clicks" and you've helped to make a difference. I'll continue to keep SLAS members informed of local issues (such as the Taum Sauk article in this newsletter) but never before has it been easier to keep abreast of federal issues. Get involved, and help make a difference!

General Membership Meeting Speaker Series

Tuesday, September 18, 2001 at 7:30 p.m. at the Creve Coeur Recreation Complex. Featured speaker, John Mabery, Manager at Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge. Also, meet the St Louis Audubon board and discover opportunities to get involved throughout the society. Open to all. From I-270 and Olive, go four blocks east on Olive, right at the light at Craig, take the Office Parkway left to the Dielmann Recreation Complex at 11400 Olde Cabin Road. Questions, call Mitch Leachman at 314-739-5112.

St. Louis Audubon Society

Volunteers Needed:

Sat or Sun, Sept 15 or 16. Bird Box Build.

Need a few handy people interested in building bird boxes to be installed later at Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge. Call Mitch Leachman, at 314-739-5112, with date/time preference and for more info.

Sun, Oct 7. Portage Island Cleanup.

Great Rivers Audubon Society will lead a cleanup of this Mississippi River island near Grafton-part of the Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge. Call Blair Campbell at 618-374-2607.

Sat, Oct 13. Gilbert Lake Work Day

At Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge. Join SLAS and the refuge staff in this kick-off project of what we hope will be a long-term relationship. Lots to do, including installation and maintenance of bird boxes, invasive plant removal, and trail cleanup. Call Mitch Leachman at 314-739-5112.

Tale Feathers

Tale Feathers is published monthly by the St. Louis Audubon Society. Messenger Printing prints 3,000 copies of each newsletter on recycled paper using soy ink. Anne Bolte edits the newsletter.

Book Review

Susan Hazelwood, President, Audubon Society of Missouri
shazelwood@socket.net

Focus Guide to the Birds of North America, Kenn Kaufman

The millennium brought us a new and long awaited field guide for use in bird identification. Kenn Kaufman, a Kansas boy who took birding circles by storm with his "big year" chase in 1973, has taken photographs from more than 80 photographers and digitally edited them creating over 2,000 images that define his latest book. A gifted artist, Kaufman uses his artistic skills and his thousands of hours spent afield, to take the best photographs he could find and make them even better. This is going to become "the book" for beginning birders. From the pictorial table of contents to the introductory text on birding basics, to the grouping of like birds together (instead of in taxonomic order), to the short, color coded, index at the rear, those starting into this stimulating hobby of birding will find this book a main tool of the trade. Of course, there is much in this book for advanced birders, too. The range maps depict summer, winter, and all season locations like most species range maps. But, the range maps also indicate whether the species is common or scarce during this seasonal timing; and different colored shading details the actual migration route used. The range maps appear on the same page with the descriptive text of the species. The enhanced photographs appear on the page opposite the range map and the descriptive text. The Peterson field guide technique of using an arrow to point out distinctive features of each species is also used here with the same effectiveness. Length measurements for each species appear next to the photograph. Birds are shown in flight when key identification features are only visible in that posture. A strong point of the Focus book is Kaufman's giving full body positioning on the page for female and juvenile/immature plumage when they differ from the male. No longer is the female bird hidden behind the male! The strength of this book is also its weakness. The digitally enhanced photographs look "cut out and pasted" onto the page. Little habitat accompanies the photographs, accentuating their "stuck on the page" appearance.

Asking price for The Focus Guide to the Birds of North America is \$20; Amazon.com is selling it for \$16. Other recommended books authored by Kaufman are: Kingbird Highway: The Story of a Natural Obsession That Got a Little Out of Hand; Lives of North American Birds (Peterson Natural History Companions); and, A Field Guide to Advanced Birding.

Get Published!

The deadline for the October issue is Sept. 10. Please send articles, events and letters to Anne.

E-mail ambolte@swbell.net

phone 314.832.0938

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St. Louis, MO 63116



EMERSON

Special Thanks!

Taum Sauk Mountain Area Threatened by Proposed Hydroelectric Plant

-Sue Gustafson

At the August 7, 2001 SLAS board of director's meeting, your board adopted a resolution opposing a proposed Ameren UE hydroelectric plant atop Church Mountain in the Taum Sauk State Park area. The following information is excerpted from articles in the Missouri Parks Association (MPA) newsletter and Audubon Missouri's (AM) Bulletin, by Susan Flader, MPA President, and Dave Bedan, AM Conservation Chairperson, respectively.

On June 11, 2001, Ameren Development Company, a subsidiary of St. Louis based Ameren Corporation, announced that it had filed a request with the Federal Energy Regulatory commission (FERC) for a preliminary permit that would pave the way for an evaluation on whether to build a new pumped-storage hydroelectric plant. The plant would be in Reynolds County on Church Mountain and on Taum Sauk Creek between Taum Sauk Mountain State Park and Johnson Shut-ins State Park. The project would level off the top of Church Mountain to build an upper reservoir and dam up Taum Sauk Creek to build a lower reservoir. The capacity of the generating plant could be as much as 770 megawatts of electricity, however these plants generate at a net loss of electricity, feasible only because of periods of peak air conditioning demands.

In 1996 the interagency Missouri Natural Areas Committee designated 7,028 acres at the core of this area with the greatest concentration of significant and exceptional features as the St. Francois Mountains Natural Area. It included more than four miles of Taum Sauk Creek, the upper 5.5 miles of which had previously been designated by the Missouri Clean Water Commission as a State Outstanding Resource Water. The new natural area was by far the largest of more than 160 areas officially designated in Missouri since 1971, in recognition of the exceptional quality of the Taum Sauk region and the new scientific emphasis on maintaining biodiversity through landscape-scale preservation. Ecologists had hoped to include also the 1300 acres of Church Mountain leased by AmerenUE to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), which was fully equal in quality to the rest, but AmerenUE declined.

Leaders of the MPA, who have examined the proposal in the context of the resource values within the potentially impacted lands, consider this project the greatest threat to any unit of the park system in the nearly two decades of MPA's existence. The proposed project strikes at the heart of what the Missouri state park system stands for: preservation and interpretation of the state's most outstanding natural and cultural features and provision of outstanding recreational opportunities in keeping with the system's mission.

The Ameren application seeks a preliminary permit-not one to authorize construction but a 36-month permit to proceed with economic and environmental studies and prepare engineering plans, including the drilling of boreholes and construction of access for drilling equipment. FERC has issued a notice dated July 5 allowing 60 days from that date for comments, protests, and motions to intervene. Since the Governor and DNR have not yet taken an official position on the Church Mountain project, it remains for concerned citizens to express their views on the project's potential impact to state and federal officials as well as to AmerenUE. St. Louis Audubon Society has issued a formal comment to FERC and copied Governor Holden and the Ameren CEO, and although receipt of this newsletter is just past the September 3 deadline for FERC comments, it is recommended that our members write anyway, as the deadline may be extended and the copies to the governor and Ameren CEO will still be valuable evidence of citizen concern. For a sample letter of what/who to write to, please contact me at smgustafson@juno.com or 314-968-8128.

OOPS!

These corections should be made to the calendar from the August newsletter

- 8/25 -Location should read Horseshoe Lake
- 9/8 - This should be listed as an all day event
- 9/22 - Starting time should read 7:00 AM
- 10/21 - Should be Horseshoe not Horshoe
- 3/9 - Should be listed as wheelchair accessible
- 4/12-4/13 - Should be Prairie Chicken Trip
- 4/28 - Should be listed as S. IL. Levee Trip

Also please change the handicap assistance to wheelchair accessible.

Highlights of ASM's 100th Anniversary Celebration in St. Louis

Paul Bauer

Three days of intense birding and socializing culminated on Sunday morning, May 6th, in one of the most spectacular warbler fall outs in my birding memory of over 50 years. Four days of a slow moving weather front north of the city, and the unique migrant trap oasis effect of urban parks combined to hit Tower Grove park as a mob of eager birders arrived! More details on this later. Two years of detailed planning and six months of intense efforts by up to fifty people came together much better than I even expected.

This 100th Anniversary Spring Meeting for the Audubon Society of Missouri (ASM) has many firsts, may this set new standards:

- Three rather than two days of field trips. Nearly half of those attending took part in the full day of Friday field trips.
- Fifteen field trips to ten locations. This was possible only because Charlene and Jim Malone were able to recruit nearly forty volunteers to serve as leaders and escorts. MY PERSONAL AND OUR COLLECTIVE THANKS TO EACH WGNSS AND AUDUBON PERSON THAT HELPED MAKE THESE FIELD TRIPS SO PRODUCTIVE AND ENJOYABLE.
- 130 people registered plus 30 additional field trip leaders and escorts. This is certainly the largest ASM meeting in my memory
- With 178 species of birds found, this may be the largest ASM meeting list ever. Three days of birding and the peak of our spring migration helped; but this was only in the Missouri half of the St. Louis area! The use of personal radios between birding groups at Tower Grove park may also have boosted birder's lists.
- Moving the ASM Spring Meeting to the first weekend in May. Our ASM board approved this special change in the Fall of 1999; thanks.
- Paying to bring in nationally known speaker, Pete Dunne. Our members fully supported this in a vote at our Fall 1999 meeting; thanks for your excellent follow up support with your attendance. About 125 persons attended the Saturday dinner and experienced Pete's unique presentation of one act play with several

different voices and accents of very famous birders from the past and present.

- The unique commemorative ASM pin was very popular on hats and shirts and cost ASM seven dollars less than a T-shirt. More pins will be available at the Fall meeting.
- The unique ASM history book created by Bill Clark does a really fine job of documenting our interesting past. More of these books will also be available at our Fall meeting. Thanks Bill for your extensive efforts. Let's hope our future is even more interesting.

5th Annual Conservation Forum

Thursday, October 4, 2001

5 to 10 p.m. The Living World

Saint Louis Zoo

Co-sponsored by the International Center for Tropical Ecology at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, Saint Louis Zoo, Missouri Botanical Garden, Missouri Department of Conservation, the Missouri Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, and Wild Oats Market.

Keynote speakers: Dr. Jan Salick, Curator of Economic Botany, Missouri Botanical Garden and Dr. Barry Chernoff, Associate Curator and Head, Fishes, Department of Zoology, Field Museum, Chicago.

Breakout sessions: Local, national and international conservation organizations will describe their activities through a series of lectures and displays.

Admission Free. Box suppers (\$11.00) available by advance reservation.

Call (314) 516-5219 for further information, registration and supper reservation or, if supper not required, register by email: icte@umsl.edu.



Fall Migration Is Underway

Jim Malone

The shorebird part of Fall migration is clearly underway, now. Buff-Breasted Sandpipers have been seen at Horseshoe Lake, Wimbrels at Carlyle Lake, and a variety of assorted sandpipers have been showing up on mudflats across the St. Louis area. It won't be long before the passerines begin moving through as well. Fall migration is a great time to hone your bird identification skills. Although Fall warblers don't wear the colorful breeding plumages we see in the Spring, they move around at a leisurely pace making them easier to study. If you are wondering where you might go to see these transient little teasers, come to any of the following bird walks and we will do our best to help you find them!

September 22 (Saturday) Carlyle Lake Pelagic, 7 AM. The time for our annual inland Pelagic trip on Carlyle Lake is nearly here! Carlyle Lake is a wonderful birding location any time of year, but offers the best chance for some really interesting birds near the end of September. This year, Dan Kassebaum and some members of the Illinois Ornithological Society will be sharing this event with us. We will bird the woods in the morning looking for migrating passerines, then embark on the pelagic portion of our trip. We will rent pontoon boats and search the lake for Sabine's gulls, Bonaparte's gulls, Terns, Grebes, and possible Jaegers. Bring a lunch for this trip and we will eat on the lake. After the pelagic, we will visit the North end of the lake, and parking lot # 3 to search for shorebirds and waterfowl. Parts of this trip may include strenuous walking, but there will be alternate paths for those who don't want that much activity. Don't miss this trip! If you are interested in taking part in our pelagic, contact Jim Malone by phone at (636) 536-1119 to make a reservation. Reservations must be in place by September 14, and seats on the boats may be limited, so reserve early. The cost for this trip is not set yet, but it will probably be in the \$15-20 per person range if expenses are similar to last year.

October 6 (Saturday) Two Rivers NWR, 8 AM. Just prior to the Fall hunting season, this trip gives us a chance to visit Gilbert Lake and Swan Lake when they have good waterfowl numbers. The Gilbert Lake area is also great for passerine birding and access to the Illinois River. This area is also a great place to look for Blue Grosbeaks in the fall. We will do a bit of walking on this trip, but it will be on level ground (gravel roads) at an easy pace. To get to the meeting point, take route 100 (the River Road) North from Alton, Illinois through Grafton, Illinois. We will meet across route 100 from the Brussels Ferry (on the right side of the road).

October 21 (Saturday) Horseshoe Lake State Park, 8 AM. October visits to Horseshoe Lake usually provides a good variety of birds. Waterfowl numbers are high, with good duck variety and the possibility for lots of grebes. Although the warblers are nearly all gone by then, several species of shorebirds can still be around, and we should have Gulls, Kinglets, and good sparrow variety at this time of year. Although there are some restrictions imposed by hunting season, we nearly always have some very interesting October birds at Horseshoe Lake. Much of this birding trip will be done from the cars and standing next to them near the road. Little or no hiking will be involved. We will meet at Horseshoe Lake State Park on Highway 111 in the first parking lot on the right after you enter the park. To get there, travel East from St. Louis on I-70/I-64, crossing the Poplar street bridge. Stay to the left where I-70 and I-64 split, continuing East on I-70. Exit at Illinois Highway 111, then turn left (go under the interstate) and travel about 2-3 miles to the entrance to Horseshoe Lake State Park (on the left side of the road).

The Native Plant Conference

September 21-23, 2001

The conference is sponsored by The Shaw Nature Reserve and is being held at Powder Valley Nature Center in Kirkwood, MO. Guest speakers are nationally renowned authors Andy Wasowski and Cole Burrell as well as local experts on native plants including Dave Tylka, Scott Woodbury and many others. There will be field trips to see how the natives are

grown and used in landscapes. Cost is \$55, or \$35 for full-time students. For information on registration and scheduling, contact Scott Woodbury at:

Native Plant Conference

Show Nature Reserve

P.O. Box 38, Gray Summit, MO 63039

636-451-3512

636-451-0541 (fax)

Member Profiles

This month begins a long-term series of profiles of St Louis Audubon members. We have chosen to begin with the current board members. Hopefully, getting to know current members, especially the board, will make it easier for you to know where and how you want to get involved.

Sue Gustafson was elected to the board as Vice President for Conservation this past April.

Describe your educational background?

Very diverse! I have a BSBA in Finance and an MBA, but what I would consider an essential component of my "education" was a Beginning Birding course I took in 1991 that literally changed my life. It led to such a burgeoning interest in birds, ecology, and wildlife conservation that I abandoned a 12 year corporate banking career to pursue my real passion. I subsequently became a licensed veterinary technician and will complete my MS in Biology this semester.

How would you describe your current occupation?

I'm currently a full time graduate student but am hoping to apply that degree in a bird conservation-related field.

What is your current function/role with SLAS?

As Vice President of Conservation, I lead a committee that stays abreast of issues related to wildlife and habitat conservation at local, state, and federal levels. We participate in meetings and write letters providing SLAS positions on those issues. Also, wherever possible we partner with related organizations to enhance our influence on the issue. I also give elementary school presentations as part of the Education Committee.

What is your #1 conservation concern at any level, local to global?

Loss of wildlife habitat due to human-caused disturbance, be it from developers building yet another strip mall or engineers "fixing" the course of a river and eliminating natural wetlands, etc., etc..

In what ways can NAS or SLAS address this concern?

The national magazine has fueled my interest in conservation issues and inspired me to try to become part of the solution. But there are so many important issues, one can easily become overwhelmed; I mean, are we going to fight every developer over every project that impacts wildlife habitat? I think a better solution is to educate people to become responsible environmental stewards, because the end results will benefit humans too! Such education starts with children, and I'm so pleased to see the focus that National is putting on education centers, and I'm thrilled that SLAS has such a strong education program led by Vicki Flier.

What is your long-term vision/goals for SLAS?

I was pleasantly surprised to learn that we have over 2200 members throughout the metropolitan area. I'd like to see each and every member get involved in at least one activity/project/issue that we offer to our members (but not all at the same time!).

Environmental White Paper

Environmental and Conservation Issues and

Comments is published each month except August by Mary Lou Miller. This white paper is a collection of all kinds of interesting things on aquariums, other organization information, newspaper and magazine articles, and environmental organization publication bits and pieces. Lately it has been about 50 two-sided pages, but that isn't the case most of the time. The object of the publication is to get more people interested in what is going on in our nation and world on the conservation front. The articles and notes are wide-spread around the world when possible. If you are an activist who likes to keep up on what is going on in Congress etc., this is the publication for you. It isn't always activist oriented and has other knowledgeable pieces on fish etc. If you would like to be on the mailing list for this white paper publication, contact Mary Lou at home: 314-389-3969, at work: 314-553-1429 or by e-mail: marylou.miller@emrsn.com.

Enjoy Life! Go Birding !!

Join us to experience a wildlife and birding safari to Tanzania during the wildebeest migration and calving.

Feb. 28 - Mar. 10, 2002

This safari may be our most exciting adventure of the three offered. We are in the Serengeti when two million wildebeest and over 300,000 zebra, giraffe, eland and topi are migrating past us in constant search of lush grassland. To witness this migration is a rare spectacle of nature, a vestige of the real unspoiled Africa.

Our Northwest/KLM Royal Dutch Airline departs New York -JFK for an overnight flight to Amsterdam; we connect with our direct flight to Arusha, Tanzania. Our experienced naturalist-birder, Jean Du Plessis, will meet and escort us to Mountain Village, located at the foot of Mt. Meru and within view of Mt. Kilimanjaro.

We spend two days in Lake Manyara National Park in a deluxe lodge overlooking the Rift Valley. Next we continue to the huge Serengeti National Park for three days to witness the massive migrating herds and associated predators, the endless rolling plains, and a large assortment of birds found only in the grasslands. We visit Oldupai Gorge where Mary Leakey found ancient man from some four million years ago. For two days we visit Ngorongoro Crater and descend 2000 feet into the 100 square-mile floor, home of some 30,000 mammals and countless birds.

A total of over 1000 species of birds have been recorded in Tanzania. On our last trip we viewed over 300 species of birds and about 40 species of mammals! We use expert local guides, small groups, a relaxed pace and budget costs. All airfare from the United States is included at group rates.

For itineraries or more information contact:

PAUL BAUER at 314-921-3972

Also, see our website:

www.stlouisaudubon.org

Wanted: Bird Sightings

The Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is looking for a little assistance. Systematic flora and fauna surveys coupled with individual volunteer and visitor observations are key to the management of any wildlife habitat. However, the DNR has not had the resources to conduct bird surveys at either Meramec or Washington state parks. Therefore, random observations of bird species and their behaviors have become even more critical, especially as the DNR is assessing progress of the glade restorations at both parks. Observations of any bird activity would be greatly appreciated, but the following are of special interest:

Painted bunting

Loggerhead shrike

Henslow's sparrow

Nesting of Cooper's, Sharp-shinned, or Red-shouldered hawks

Nesting of Cerulean warblers

Any bird on the Missouri list of bird species of conservation concern which can be viewed at

<http://www.conservation.state.mo.us/nathis/endangered/checklst/index.htm>

All sightings should be reported to the state park visitor center, attention park naturalist, or can be e-mailed directly to Dan Drees at nrdreed@mail.dnr.state.mo.us.

St. Louis Audubon Society 2001 - 2002

St. Louis Audubon Society

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Kirkwood, MO 63122

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This form makes you a member of **both** the National and St. Louis Audubon.

St. Louis Audubon Society Membership Form

Audubon is a membership organization dedicated to protecting birds, other wildlife, and their habitats. Our members are the source of our volunteer strength and the foundation of our financial support. By becoming a member, you will receive National Audubon Society's magazine as well as the St. Louis Audubon Society newsletter, *Tale Feathers*

Membership category desired:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Introductory / \$20 | ☐ Individual / \$35 |
| ☐ Sr. Citizen / \$21 | ☐ Sr. Citizen Family / \$23 |
| ☐ Family / \$40 | ☐ Sustaining / \$50 |
| ☐ Supporting / \$100 | ☐ Other (_____) |

Send a check made out to:
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P.O. Box 220227
St. Louis, Mo. 63122

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N01 7XCH

Please support your local chapter. Use this form to join or renew.